DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 020 CS 210 305

AUTHOR Jenkins, Rhonda, Ed.
TITLE Spelling Is For Ever. Reading Around Series.
INSTITUTION Australian Reading Association, Adelaide.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-949512-11-7
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 64p.; Supplement to the Australian Journal of Reading, Volume 9, No. 4. Several tables use small print.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Reading Association, PO Box 78, Carlton South 3053, Victoria, Australia.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Learning Strategies; Resource Materials; *Spelling Instruction; Teacher Education; *Teaching Methods; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS Australia

ABSTRACT

The responsibility of all teachers to help children develop spelling strategies is addressed in a series of articles in this journal supplement. Following an introduction by the editor, the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Development in Word Knowledge" (Peggy Goldsmith); (2) "Spelling Can Be Taught" (Faye Bolton and Diane Snowball); (3) "The Teaching of Spelling in Perspective" (Heather Fehring); (4) "Teaching Children Spelling through Their Writing" (Judy Turner); (5) "Take Parents with You" (Glyn Turner); (6) "Matching Spelling Instruction to Individual Writers" (Rhonda Jenkins); and (7) "Spelling Is For Ever" (Geoff Ward). The articles stress that while students can be encouraged to use a variety of resources in confirming spelling attempts, teachers, as writers, need some personal and effective tactics so that immediate demands on spelling memory are fulfilled. (Illustrations, tables, figures, and references are included with most articles.) (AEW)

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SPELLING IS FOR EVER

Edited by Rhonda Jenkins

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Reading Around Series
Supplement to A.J.R. Volume 9, No. 4

Australian Reading Association
ISBN 0 949512 11 7
Series ISBN 0812-1710
Publication No. NBG 6808

First published in 1986 by
Australian Reading Association

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National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-publication data

Reading Around series
Spelling is for ever.

1. English language – Orthography and spelling – Study and teaching (Elementary).
2. English language – Orthography and spelling – Study and teaching (Primary).
I. Jenkins, Rhonda. II. Australian Reading Association.

ISBN 372.6'32
Series ISBN 0 949512 11 7
0 812 - 1710

Typeset by Bookset
Printed by Rowprint Services (Vic.) Pty. Ltd.

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Introduction

Spelling is a valued skill of society, and often a visible measure of literacy competence. It is the responsibility of all teachers to help children develop spelling strategies that will be useful throughout life. Student learning will be more effective if teachers are aware of the developmental signposts of spelling growth. Diane Snowball and Peggy Goldsmith have described how teaching and learning experiences that are part of purposeful language use can both encourage and signal growth and development.

Heather Fehring takes a close look at a variety of approaches to the teaching of spelling. Her article clearly demonstrates that the matching of instruction to individual needs has *not* been part of traditional approaches, and confirms the importance of providing spelling instruction within the context of meaningful language experiences.

The role of parent expectations in supporting teachers' efforts cannot be underplayed. Glyn Turner suggests that 'taking them with you' when new school policies are being developed can make parents part of the team. Attitude change in parents, children and teachers can occur in tandem while moving away from rigidly structured, well-known programs of spelling instruction towards the newer and less-known approaches. Judy Turner has provided a continuum of this process of change. She has contrasted the segmented teaching of spelling as a separate subject with a problem-solving and strategy-development approach. Reassurance is needed, but by moving gradually through the change process, teachers will be able to bring together many of the learning processes in the classroom.

The monitoring of individual strengths and weaknesses in the use of spelling strategies has been a special interest of my own. Spelling instruction that is matched closely to individual needs of writers can be provided when a systematic record is kept of strategy use in real writing. A Spelling Miscue Analysis is suggested as a method that can provide the necessary information efficiently.

Geoff Ward reminds us of the need to ensure that individuals must, in the long run, develop their own ways of dealing with problem spellings. We can encourage students to use all sorts of resources in confirming spelling attempts, but know that, as adult writers, we need some personal and effective tactics that fulfil immediate demands on spelling memory. I am sure that each of us has a 'demon' word or two. Sharing the strategies we each use to deal with our own spelling problems may enlighten both ourselves and our students.

Rhonda Jenkins

Acknowledgement
The child comments which appear throughout the book are extracts from *Home and School* by J. Goodnow and A. Burns (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985), and are reproduced by kind permission of the publishers.

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Diane Snowball lectures in language arts at Phillip Institute of Technology, Victoria. She is also a publisher and writer.

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Judy Turner is assistant principal at the Junction Public School in NSW. She has worked as a language consultant in the Hunter Region, encouraging teachers to take up a whole language approach.

Geoff Ward lectures in reading and language arts in the School of Education at James Cook University in Townsville, Queensland. He has long been fascinated by the problems of fitting the teaching of spelling into a whole language program.

Development In Word Knowledge

Peggy Goldsmith

It wasn't until we, as lecturers in education, were providing spelling assistance to final year Dip. Ed. students, that the implications of the theory of developmental learning hit me with full force. Here were adults of 22 years who wanted to know how apostrophes worked, who wanted to be helped with mnemonics for homonyms like stationery/stationary and words like queue, who wanted (unbelievably) to know how dictionaries worked! They also needed assistance such as that provided in the *Macquarie Junior Dictionary* or *The Pergamon Dictionary of Perfect Spelling*, both of which give alternative phonetic possibilities as a prelude to finding a word.

These were student teachers, whose spelling mishaps were being laughed at by their own students. Without exception, these men and women told us that they had been labelled 'poor spellers' from early on. Their consequent attitude had prevented further development until recently, when they had a great need and then a desire to become better at spelling. Following the spelling sessions, these people still had difficulty in spelling many words, but by that time they had developed strategies either to find what they needed, or to relate what they knew to what they didn't. They had developed a spelling conscience!

To put spelling into perspective means to focus on what students of a language know about words — their use, their meaning and the connections between new words and old words or ideas.

Numerous attempts have been made, by investigators interested in children's cognitive development and its relationship to learning to write and spell, to delineate stages of word knowledge up to Year 4, or approximately ten years of of age (e.g. Read 1971, Beers & Henderson 1977, Zutell 1979, Gentry 1981). Few studies, however, have attempted to define later developmental stages, beyond Year 4, although stages and development undoubtedly exist.

Contributions from investigators working in the field of vocabulary development have been disappointing. No attempts have been made to describe growth in word knowledge in terms either of stages or of particular aspects of vocabulary or lexicon. Rather, the focus of studies in the area of vocabulary development has been on vocabulary instruction.

In view of these limitations there seemed to be a need to specify developmental stages in word knowledge beyond Year 4, from both a writing and spelling perspective and as a vocabulary development perspective. The term 'developmental' is used here in two ways:

1. There is a sequence of events and personal stages through which each individual passes, in order to arrive at a stage of competence in writing and reading. Children develop literacy influenced by their cognitive and social development as well as their physical and emotional development. It is likely that delayed development in any or all of these four areas will affect the child's knowledge of words, because such development relies on life experiences for its enrichment and meaning connections.
2. There is an implication that learners are spaced out on a continuum. Some learners may plateau at a particular point, others may be so interested in learning about words that all their available strategies are developed and used continuously, their knowledge of words broadening all the time. The teacher, too, is on this continuum. Encouragement to try new strategies and learn more about words is the approach used, when a learning process is seen to be developmental.

Developmental theories

Awareness of words implies not only spelling knowledge but memory for words and meanings of words. In outlining a strategy for reading specialists to use with subject teachers, Dupuis & Snyder (1983, p.299) suggested that: 'Vocabulary is cumulative. Throughout our lives we learn new words as we learn new information'. They suggested that our ability to retain those words and their meanings is directly related to several principles of learning:

1. The more frequently we use words, the easier it is to recall and use them.
2. The more different ways we have used words and seen them used, the easier it is to remember them.
3. The more important or interesting the words are to us, the easier it is to remember them.
4. The more we know about the whole subject, the easier it is to remember specific words related to it.

In suggesting that vocabulary knowledge is cumulative, Dupuis & Snyder (1983) were implying that developmental growth in knowledge of words in students is assisted by the four learning strategies outlined above.

Chomsky (1970, p.17), in discussing the relationship between phonology and reading, remarked on the continuing development of word knowledge in older children.

> It would not be surprising to discover that the child's intuitive organization of the sound system continues to develop and deepen as his vocabulary is enriched and as his use of language extends to wider intellectual domains and more complex functions. Hence the sound system that corresponds to the orthography may itself be a *late intellectual product*.

Unfortunately, Chomsky did not explore the stage at which an awareness of this correspondence occurs in students. He noted the beginnings of awareness in children and hypothesised that full knowledge of the correspondence of sound and symbol systems may occur *quite late*. This may, in fact, occur when students are in high school, which suggests a further stage of development in word awareness.

Chomsky (1970) had proposed that young children learn to write words by applying their knowledge of English phonology to an underlying abstract form of words, called *lexical units*. Whilst this suggests that growing word knowledge is reflected in spelling ability, Chomsky has not provided any empirical evidence for this proposal. Not being an educationist, he has simply attempted to explain the connection between young children's knowledge of sounds and their early spelling and writing stages.

Changes in spelling strategies used by children occur sequentially and systematically, not haphazardly, according to conclusions reached by Read (1971) and Beers & Henderson (1977). Later spellings indicate that the students are cognisant of additional characteristics of written words. Beers & Beers (1980) suggested that a child who consistently spells correctly is one who has had the opportunity to examine many words over a considerable length of time. From their research, they provided evidence to support Read's contention (1971) that for young children (preschool to Year 2), learning to spell is a matter of knowledge, rather than of habit. Dupuis & Snyder (1983) make the same observation regarding the ability to retain words learnt and to remember their meanings.

Recent studies support the view that many aspects of language development are related, with knowledge of one area assisting knowledge in another — for example, the influence of English spelling patterns on pronunciation, the effects of dictionary-skill lessons and written composition on spelling achievement, the relation of vocabulary knowledge to comprehension.

Many of the hypotheses regarding older children's developing word knowledge have arisen from studies of younger (preschool to Year 4) children's writing and vocabulary. For children to be able to change 'lexical spelling' into correctly spelled words — especially unfamiliar ones — Beers & Beers (1970, p.170) suggested that a higher level of abstract thinking was a necessary prerequisite. 'It may be that such a complete understanding of written language does not occur within the Piagetian framework *until the age of formal operations*.' This view is not at variance with Chomsky's (1970) hypothesis.

That vocabulary development does continue beyond Year 4 is implicit in Haggard's recommendations (1982) in 'The Vocabulary Self Collection Strategy'. In this article, Haggard suggested that for older students to continue developing in word knowledge beyond Year 4, teacher instruction should be directed towards those words students need to know. The words must be important to students and likely to be encountered in daily communication, recreational reading, textbook discussion and in and out of class discussion. The style of this instruction is suggested by several writers: John Mellon in his chapter on 'Language Competence' in Cooper (1981), O'Rourke (1974) and also Edgar Dale (1975). These writers proposed teaching students roots, prefixes, etymologies, compounds, derivational groupings, new coinages, borrowings from other languages — all in a systematic way, establishing expectations regarding dictionary use and thesaurus use. From these suggestions, it may be inferred that later development of word knowledge is related to an increasing awareness of roots, affixes, etymologies and so on.

Hypothesised developmental stages

I am currently examining the word knowledge of older students (Years 5 to 11) through their performance in a series of word tests. These encompass the full range of language influence, i.e. the phonological, the morphological, the syntactic and the semantic, in order to determine whether there is a developmental sequence from Year 5 to Year 11.

For the purpose of this investigation, a number of developmental stages, extending from preschool to Year 11, has been hypothesised (Table 1.1). This table shows approximate ages and corresponding stages of orthographic awareness (or developing word-spelling awareness), which up to stage 5 have largely been specified by other writers (Read 1970, Beers & Henderson 1977, Zutell 1979). I have hypothesised stage 6, which is the subject of the present study. It is necessarily a broad classification, given the dearth of research findings at this level.

The descriptions for word knowledge stages have been hypothesised from the results of a number of vocabulary studies, and word as 'concept' literature. (Anglin 1970, Gillet & Kita 1979, Sulzby 1978, Templeton & Spivey 1980). Once again stage 6 is broadly classified, as research findings at this level are sparse. Indeed, it is because of the lack of research findings of older students' lexical development that the present investigation was proposed.

Table 1.1 Correspondence of orthographic awareness to developing word knowledge in English

Approximate ages	*Orthographic awareness*	*Word knowledge*
3½–6 years	1. *The random stage* Children randomly order letters, e.g. *BtSD* for *ship* — pretend writing/tend to centre attention on a single striking feature, e.g. the main sound of the word, *r* for *water* 2. *The prephonetic stage* Children give one-, two-, or three-letter spellings that show letter-sound correspndences, e.g. *MSR* for *monster* — still centring attention on salient features.	1. *Word awareness* Children know there is a connection between writing letters/shapes and agreed meanings. Early awareness of word as a concept 2. *Early knowledge of words* Greater knowledge of appropriate sound/symbol correspondences in words. Approach words from left to right. Some homonym understanding
5–7 years	3. *The phonetic stage* An almost perfect match between letters and sounds, e.g. *it was* (was) *onelee* (only). Decentring, to take account of all features.	3. *Individual words identified* Increasing word knowledge; generally spaces between words clearly defined in writing. Understand that a word is the pattern of marks made by letters. Content words recognised as words more often than function words.
6–8 years	4. *The transitional vowel stage* Words do look like English, though often misspelled, e.g. *MONSTOR*, *monster*; *EGUL*, *eagle* — decentring.	4. *Choosing words* Close representation of known vocabulary; an ability to select and isolate words for oral or written use. When grouping words, tend to use thematic or 'concrete' labels for linking.
8–10 years	5. *The awareness of conventional spelling stage* Children are ready for formal instruction by the teacher, who assists children's own writing and spelling. Writing allows children to hypothesise and generate correct spelling.	5. *Knowledge of relations between words* Children respond to and show knowledge of relationships between words, e.g. *govern*, *government*; *two*, *twin*, *twice* (notion of two-ness). When grouping words, show early shift to paradigmatic link, e.g. dark/*light*, not dark/*night* — (syntagmatic).
10+ years	6. *The construction of hypotheses stage* Able to spell complex words. Focus on relationship between words, e.g. *pend*, *appendix*, *pending*; also *horizon*, *horizontal*. Construct hypotheses by using analogy and by combining known systems, e.g. roots plus affixes: *communicate*, *communication*. Draw on a range of semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological information to spell unfamiliar words.	6. *Related word meaning identified/ Control of register* Able to see the ways in which meaning is visually preserved in related words despite variations in pronunciation. Lexical growth showing greater superordinate knowledge, e.g. *chair*, *table* are both *furniture*; and conceptually more abstract links between words, e.g. *boy*, *flower*, are *alive*. Awareness of style in writing and of different genres.

Studies of development of word knowledge in older students (10–22 years)

Despite a general acceptance of further word knowledge development beyond a fourth-grade level (e.g. Chomsky 1970, Beers & Beers 1970, Zutell 1979, Haggard 1982), few studies have investigated the phenomenon.

In one such study, Hodges (1982, p.287) concluded that 'The concept that language acquisition is a developmental process is of fundamental importance to our understanding of how spelling ability is acquired'. His conclusion was reached on the basis of an ongoing study of regional 'spelling-bee' contestants, aged ten to fourteen, which revealed that these proficient spellers drew upon a full range of semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological information when attempting to spell words that were unfamiliar to them. It seems that they resorted to the earlier phoneme-grapheme strategy or sound-symbol correspondence *only* when other higher-order clues failed to yield from memory the particular words that they were attempting to spell.

Hodges' sample of regional spelling-bee contestants consisted of very special students — those with an exceptional talent or interest in words. His study tells us nothing of the average-to-good spellers, their strategies and their knowledge of words. His study does provide evidence of another stage of development though, encompassing a full range of semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological information about words.

In his study of pupils at Years 6, 8 and 10, Templeton (1979) came to the conclusion that for older good spellers, the visual memory of base words and derivatives was a more powerful aid to correct spelling than the sound of a word, or its pronunciation. He asserted that for many people the most readily accessible information about words may be monitored through their knowledge of spelling, as opposed to having the words spoken. Templeton pointed to a significant change for the older writer — that the normal relation between alphabetic writing and speech is reversed; the group of letters becomes the real word, the pronunciation its symbol. His results showed that the correlation between vowel alternation and spelling ability increased across grades

Templeton used a wider ability-range of pupils than did Hodges, and he chose a school whose pupils came from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Templeton (1979) used pseudowords though in a narrow study of a particular aspect of word knowledge (word analogy in this case). This again limits the extent to which one can generalise satisfactorily to older school students regarding their developing word knowledge. Nevertheless, the study provided evidence both of a developing ability in knowledge of words across the older grades, and of a significant change in orientation of that knowledge. Templeton did not suggest that this change was a possible new stage of development for the older students, as his study was limited to an investigation of base words and derivatives, and does not encompass the full range of word knowledge, but just focuses on morphological influences on word awareness.

Further support for the notion of a developmental trend for students in word knowledge is given in a study by Derwing & Baker (1979) — also on the acquisition of English morphology. These researchers used judgmental techniques to study students' word knowledge. They asked students if certain words seemed related to each other — if one came from the other, and then they asked students to rate the certainty of their responses. They found that with age, there was an increasing capacity for morpheme recognition. They also found that younger children (Years 3 to 6) tended to rely more on phonetic considerations than did older students (18 to 22 years), who used derivational rules or semantic information. This study indicates another area of change, from younger to older students' knowledge in a new stage — development from phonetic to derivational focus when dealing with words, e.g. communi*cate*, communi*cation*.

In some of the few investigations involving older students' knowledge of word meanings, Anglin (1970) looked at the growth in word meaning of a wide range of subjects. Following an experiment which concluded that children can put twenty particular words into their proper places in simple English sentence frames, one study (known as the Bower experiment) aimed to check students' ability to see a relation between those words in the absence of sentence frames.

For this particular aspect of word knowledge, *parts of speech*, development continues from grades 3 and 4 onwards, right through the intermediate and senior school years, levelling off for adults.

In a study which followed the Bower experiment and used the same subjects, Bruner and Olver's notion of equivalence was used. Subjects were asked to write above each pair of words what both have in common, what makes them similar in meaning, for example, golf and tennis are both sports. Results showed that the percentage of similarities increased with age, the percentage of blanks decreased with age, and the percentage of inappropriate responses remained fairly low and roughly constant.

Anglin (1970) concluded from these studies, and from earlier ones he carried out, that there was indeed a picture of lexical growth which had several broad features of interest. Very young children showed a tendency to be idiosyncratic in their organisation of words, and any uniformity appears to be based on a thematic principle. There appeared to be a gradual transition from one mode of organisation (words bound by concrete relations) to the other (words bound by more abstract features), between the two age extremes, the young and the adult.

Not all researchers have gained results that showed a developmental trend. Freyd & Baron (1982) investigated the learning of morphologically complex words. Eighth graders and fifth graders (considered to be of high academic ability and faster learners of vocabulary) were given a vocabulary test consisting of simple words (e.g. bachelor, benign) and derived words (e.g. tubular, oceanic). The results showed the superiority of the fifth graders was greater for the derived words than for the simple ones. The fifth graders' advantage at defining derived words was said to be due entirely to their greater tendency to analyse the words into roots and suffixes. While this study is useful from the point of view of students' techniques of learning new vocabulary (pseudowords), it does not weaken the notion of the developmental nature of word knowledge, as these two groups were approximately matched for the 'same overall vocabulary knowledge' (Freyd & Baron 1982, p. 284) in the first instance.

For the purposes of my study, word knowledge constitutes knowledge of:

1. the spelling of a wide range of words;
2. phonological influences on derived words, using base words and suffixes;
3. semantic and morphological links between words;
4. syntactic influences on homonyms;
5. appropriate choice of words for words in context;
6. appropriate use of idiomatic phrases in sentence frames.

The following is one of the questions being considered:
Is there a developmental trend after Year 4 in each of the above-mentioned aspects of word knowledge?

Pilot tests have been administered to students from Year 5 to Year 9, using whole classes. So far, *spelling* strategies used by older students (Year 7) indicated a higher use of meaning connections or morpho-phonemic strategies, and younger students (Year 5) tended to rely more heavily on sound/symbol correspondences. Older students also spelt more words correctly than younger students. There were significant differences in the strategies used by Year 6 and Year 8 students in spelling *derived* words (base word and affix given, e.g. *decide*, *-sion*: *decision*), the older students again relying more on a meaning strategy than did younger students. There were significant grade differences between Year 5 and Year 7 students in the *syntax test*, where missing words were placed in context in sentences (e.g. their, there, they're), with the older students having more words spelt correctly and with appropriate syntax.

There are certain attitudes, knowledge, strategies and abilities that teachers can plan for children to develop as they gain experience with written language (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Characteristics of proficient spellers

Attitudes	*Knowledge*	*Strategies/Abilities*
1. Confident to experiment with words — see it as a problem-solving task	1. Have a well-developed language competence	1. Use current understandings of the spelling system in attempts to make conventional spellings — use generalisations
2. Have a positive attitude towards themselves as spellers	2. Possess information which helps them to spell (sound/symbol relations, common patterns, meaning connections)	2. Use clear handwriting, which assists visual memory
3. Have an interest in words, and enjoy using them	3. Shift focus to units of meaning within words from a solely sound/symbol orientation	3. Use a range of resources (mnemonics, authoritative sources) to check spelling attempts
4. Want to use appropriate spelling	4. Know that accurate spelling makes writing easier and helps in communication	4. Transfer knowledge of other language modes into spelling
	5. Know how to use appropriate resources to assist spelling	5. Recognise and correct errors — proofread their writing

Source: *Spelling R-7 Language Arts*, Education Department of SA; F. Bolton & D. Snowball, *Springboards: Ideas for Spelling*, Nelson, 1985.

Attitudes

Teachers need to view *all* children as future proficient spellers (developmental spellers) in order that children may grow in confidence and in risk-taking with words. Teachers who have an interest in words will develop that interest in the children they teach. *Knowledge* will come to children from many sources — from parents and society as well as from the teacher and their own observations. Teachers are able both to demonstrate strategies and to assist those of the children, as they observe and analyse children's spelling attempts. The combination and appropriate use of a number of strategies in spelling become, over time, *abilities* in spelling.

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'Wish we had spelling on Sunday, because then I would not be there.' *(Grade 3 comment)*

Spelling Can Be Taught

F. Bolton and D. Snowball

Writing provides the purpose for spelling; consequently, a spelling program should grow out of a significant and active writing program. Although spelling must be taught according to individual needs in writing, it is also necessary to involve children in a wider program, which purposely exposes them to the various features of English orthography.

Spelling is not merely the memorisation of words. It involves the use of strategies which may vary according to the words being attempted and the knowledge that the writer has aquired through experiences with words. Good spellers tend to:

- View spelling as a problem-solving task, thus being prepared to attempt unknown words by making use of prior knowledge to predict the most likely spelling;
- have a well-developed language competence, through exposure to words;
- have an interest in words;
- have a 'spelling conscience', and consequently are prepared to proofread their writing;
- have a large number of remembered spellings, and can therefore write a large number of words as whole units;
- have a learning method or systematic procedure for learning new or difficult words;
- be confident about their ability to spell;
- be able to make generalisations and deductions readily.

They tend to use the following strategies:

- the knowledge of the morphological structure of words and the consequent relationships between words;
- the knowledge of grapho-phonic relationships — that is, the variety of sound/symbol relationships, the probability of letter sequences, the likely position of letters in a word and possible letter patterns;
- the ability to use visual memory to determine whether a word looks correct;
- the ability to apply a large number of generalisations;
- the ability to develop and use mnemonics, or memory aids (a *piece* of *pie*);

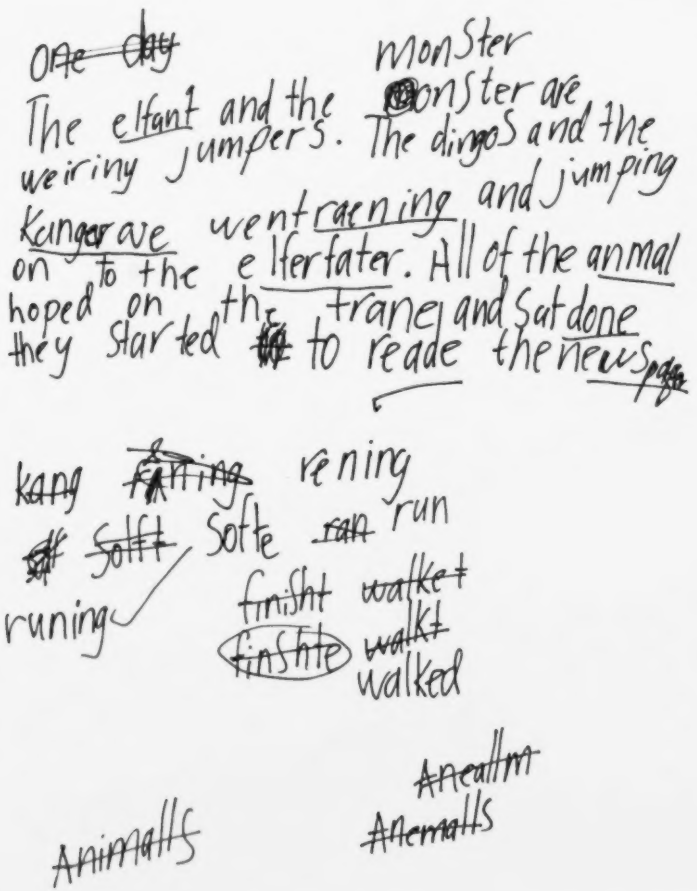
A worthwhile spelling program will purposely lead children towards developing the above strategies and habits. Effective spelling instruction requires environments in which children are encouraged to read and write extensively and to test, evaluate and revise, if necessary, their developing theories of how the spelling system works. The learning environment for spelling is the total life environment, and the classroom spelling environment encompasses all curriculum areas.

Spelling competency in the classroom can be fostered through the following practices.

1. Provide purposeful and varied writing experiences daily: reports, stories, songs, recipes, signs, letters, lists, messages.
2. Model conventional spelling through class writing activities: class diaries, string writing, substitute writing, wall stories, class signs and instructions.
3. Provide children with an insight into the strategies you are using, as a speller, by making use of meaning relationships between words — writing a word several ways in order to see which one looks right, using resources to check spelling, and admitting that you do not know how to spell all words.
4. Encourage children to take risks and invent spellings.
5. De-emphasise correct spelling in initial writing drafts, even though published work should be spelt correctly.
6. Help pupils to develop a spelling consciousness, when writing, through consideration of their future audience.
7. Develop an interest in words through word investigations (e.g. investigating word origins) and word searches (e.g. searching for words with particular patterns or features).
8. Observe and evaluate children's progress in order to intervene appropriately according to their stages of development.
9. Respond appropriately to nonstandard spelling by understanding the strategies that children may be using.
10. Assist children to form generalisations about the regular nature of English orthography.

Children do need to have rich interaction with written language through daily reading and writing, where every contact with print should be viewed as an opportunity to learn something new about spelling in particular, and writing in general. Daily time should be allocated to the teaching of spelling activities within the context of writing in all curriculum areas. This does not mean that spelling should be seen as an isolated skill to be taught, but that strategies should be developed throughout each day as the most suitable opportunities arise.

A balanced spelling program is one in which the teacher will work with individual children or groups according to their needs in personal writing, and will plan class activities that highlight aspects of English orthography and focus on spelling strategies. For example, individual children may be helped to accept responsibility for their own spelling by proofreading their writing and, where possible, attempting to correct words they consider to be misspelt — the sample of writing on page 16 indicates how one child did this. The steps taken were as follows:



1. The child wrote the piece.
2. The child was asked to underline words considered to be misspelt and to make further attempts at spelling those words. The word 'walked' was successfully attempted and other words were written closer to the conventional form. The child ticked the word 'runing' as though it was correct.
3. From observing which words were not underlined, the teacher had an idea about further needs of the writer.
4. From observing attempts at spelling new words, the teacher gained insights into the strategies being used.
5. Not all incorrect words could be learned immediately by the child. The teacher could help the child form generalisations about adding the suffixes 'ed' and 'ing' to words, and could encourage the child to learn specific words that might be useful in future writing.

Even when working with individuals or groups, it is more useful to work towards the development of overall spelling strategies than just to the memorisation of isolated words. Some activities to assist the development of strategies and develop an interest in words are as follows:

Morphemic strategy

- Conduct word searches for words that contain a particular suffix, prefix or derivative, or note the meaning of these.
- Write words that are in the same word family, e.g. appear, disappear, appearance, reappeared.
- Identify words within compound words and, where appropriate, build up other words based on these, e.g. goldmine: goldrush, undermine, mine shaft, goldfish. Note the meaning related links between the words.
- List contractions, identify the component words and note which letter or letters the apostrophe represents.
- Find the meanings of derivatives in words and build lists of words based on such derivatives, e.g. kilometre, kilogram, kilowatt, kilojoule.
- Form generalisations about comparatives and superlatives.
- Form generalisations about plurals.
- Discover the origin of words, such as in acronyms (e.g. scuba: self-contained underwater breathing apparatus), words from other languages (e.g. gateaux), eponyms (words originating from a person or place, e.g. pavlova, pasteurisation, champagne), blended words (words made by combining parts of two words, e.g. brunch: breakfast/lunch).
- Give crossword clues that relate to morphemic aspects of a word, e.g. pineapple: a compound word, of which the second part is 'apple'.

Visual strategy

- Provide correct models of print in the environment, ensuring that the classroom has many signs, labels, and directions.
- Provide books for the children to read which do not have limited vocabulary but present interesting words.
- When on excursions, draw attention to print in the environment.
- Add high-interest and high-frequency words — from all types of reading materials and environmental print — to class word lists.
- Use materials read by children to conduct searches for words that contain a particular spelling pattern, e.g. 'ai': said, paid.
- Build words from a base word by deleting or adding a letter, e.g. farm — arm, all — tall.
- Note spelling of interesting words, e.g. sciatica, manoeuvre.
- Use letters of a particular word to make the other words, e.g. bushranger: hang, shrub, rare.
- Find words within words, e.g. bushranger: bush, ranger, bus, rang.
- Transform words through letter changing, e.g. said: sand — band — bond — bold — told.
- Search for palindromes (words spelt the same forwards and backwards), e.g. level, madam.
- Search for anagrams (words which are made up of the same group of letters), e.g. read, dare, dear.
- Note the meaning of each homophone in a set, e.g. hear and here.
- Play games such as Hangman, encouraging children to make predictions according to the serial probability of letters.
- Encourage children to develop a method of learning a word, e.g. look — say — cover — write — check.
- Give crossword clues that relate to visual aspects of the word, e.g. 'It's not a pie; spelt like nasty'.

Phonetic strategy

- List words with a particular sound in common, e.g. /sh/: ocean, ma*ch*ine, fi*sh*, na*t*ion, mi*ss*ion, *s*ugar.
- Provide children with a word from a story and ask them to find another word that rhymes with it, e.g. day — they.
- Note the meaning of each homophone in a set, e.g. there and their.
- Give crossword clues that relate to phonetic aspects of the word, e.g. 'Used for opening doors; rhymes with knees'.

Beginning spellers tend to rely more on the phonetic strategy than do advanced spellers. Consequently, it may be more useful to focus on activities relating to this strategy with beginning spellers, but on activities relating to the morphemic strategy as children's spelling competence develops.

Overall, the teacher's role should be one of leading children to form generalisations about English orthography rather than of providing children with a set of rules. These generalisations should be constantly reviewed and refined in the light of new experiences with written language.

Evaluation of the class spelling programm

The teacher should continually review objectives in the light of children's spelling strengths and weaknesses. Evaluating the program can be achieved through questions such as:

1. Am I dealing with spelling in relation to writing?
2. Am I developing spellers willing to take risks, by providing positive reinforcement for each attempt?
3. Were the overall objectives that I planned at the beginning of the year appropriate? If not, what needs to be changed?
4. Am I aware of the children's self-esteem and self-image?
5. Am I doing spelling activities on a daily basis and in all curriculum areas?
6. Am I assisting children to develop beyond their initial capabilities?
7. Am I developing class word lists and making sufficient use of these?
8. Am I catering for class, group and individual needs?
9. Am I relating the activities to children's stages of development?
10. Am I providing a variety of resources for children to use?
11. Am I providing models of correct spelling through a variety of activities?
12. Have I explained to parents the objectives of my spelling program?
13. Does my spelling program reflect the school policy, and do my activities reflect the objectives of my program?
14. Are the children in my class aware of the objectives of my spelling program?

Spelling assessment should be viewed within the total language context and especially within the context of writing.

Conclusion

The achievement of accuracy in spelling is a gradual process that is acquired through trial and error, modelling by adults and peers, hypothesis testing and opportunities for practice. It is incorrect to assume that children will learn to spell merely through exposure to print. They need to be immersed in a print environment where spelling serves real purposes and is used in meaningful contexts. Children's approximations must be accepted and encouraged, and all parties must expect that the children are capable of learning to spell in the conventional way. They need daily opportunities to write and to assume responsibility for selecting the words they wish to learn. Teachers need to provide a learning enviroment within which children take an interest in words and feel that they can communicate with others in written form. A spelling program should be planned to demonstrate the use of spelling strategies and desirable spelling habits.

'I like spelling. I am a good speller.' *(Grade 2 comment)*

I hate spelling. I usually get bad marks.' *(Grade 5 comment)*

The Teaching of Spelling in Perspective

Heather Fehring

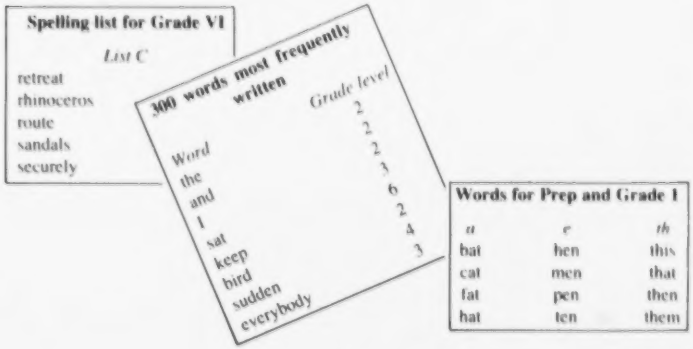
A multitude of different teaching methods can be found to bewilder anyone attempting to come to terms with how children learn to spell. With only a brief overview of the material, it soon becomes apparent that these programs fall into several major categories in the approach to the teaching of spelling. This article reviews several of these programs and critically analyses the underlying rationale of each method. In examining these programs, it becomes evident why spelling should be considered as an integral part of an integrated language program.

The list method

The list method is usually based on the principle that there is a group of words that all children need to learn how to spell. This core group of words can then be divided into subgroups, representing grade levels or age levels. The spelling program is structured so that every child is expected to learn a number of words daily or weekly. A test of ten, twenty or fifty words is regularly given at the end of this learning period.

The origin of such spelling lists varies considerably as, for example, lists of words can be based on:

- frequency of occurrence in children's writing;
- frequency of occurrence in children's and adults' writing;
- frequency of occurrence in children's literature;
- most frequently misspelled words;
- phonic family groups;
- no stated source at all.



The reasoning behind the list method is as follows:

1. The major goal of spelling instruction should be to teach children the words they will most likely need in their daily activities and later in adult life.
2. Although it may be impossible to teach all the words necessary, it should be possible to teach those basic words that are most frequently used.
3. Studies investigating which words are necessary to writers have shown that about 3000 words provide for approximately 95 per cent of their needs.
4. Therefore, the spelling program should consist of this core list of words divided into specific grade-level allotments.

The problems of such a program are:

- The learning theory underlying this method is rote memorisation of a series of items. What spelling strategies do children have if a word they want to write is not on their list?
- The division of the core list of words into grade or age levels is an arbitrary process, which differs from scheme to scheme.

Spelling: Grade III to Form II
(Education Department of Victoria 1969)

Level 1	*Level 10*	*Level 16*
and	mountain	its
time	meet	especially

3000 Words Most Frequently Written, Grades 2-8 (Thomas 1979)

	Grade level		*Grade level*		*Grade level*		*Grade level*
and	2	its	3	mountain	4	especially	5
time	2			meet	4	Saskatchewan	5

NZCER Alphabetical Spelling List (Arvidson 1969)

	Level		*Level*		*Level*
and	1	mountain	3	especially	4
time	1	meet	3		
its	1				

- The origins of the core list of words are so diverse that they are meaningless in relation to the stated rationalisation of the list method — for example, words collected from a sample of school children's compositions, a sample of adult letters to a magazine, research conducted in sixty-two Victorian schools, and words collected in the 1940s.

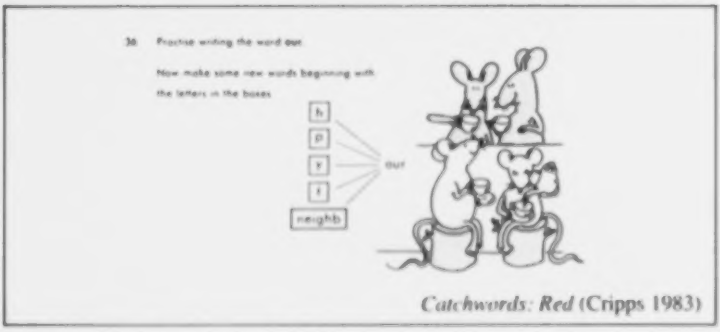
What is the justification for children learning, if in fact they do, a list of isolated, unrelated words? This method does not deal with the meanings, the usage, or the pronunciation of a word.

The visual method

The basic assumption underlying this method is that learning to spell involves the use of visual cognitive processes. This view is supported by Margaret Peters and Charles Cripps in *Catchwords: Ideas for Teaching Spelling*(1983) and by Harold Clarke in *Two-Way Spelling* (1980). Peters and Cripps (p.10) claim that:

> Spelling is a visual and *not* an auditory skill. Children must be shown words that contain similar letter patterns. They must be trapped into looking with interest at words so that they will look at them with intent and intention to reproduce these words without copying; . . . children are instructed to *look at*, and practise *writing from memory*, words which look the same.

The student workbooks in both these spelling programs contain activities based on the principle that words should be grouped according to their visual structure, irrespective of their sounds. Words which look the same because they contain the same letter strings are therefore grouped together. For example, an *ear* letter pattern might include the words fear, hear, earth, hearth and wear. An *ough* letter pattern would group words like cough, bough, thorough, through, dough and hiccough together. Learning to spell according to this view involves looking at words, visually tagging groups of words with the same letter pattern, and then reproducing the spelling from memory.



Catchwords: Red (Cripps 1983)

The other central feature of both programs is the emphasis on the development of a method of learning to spell new words. This involves children developing a routine known as the LOOK-COVER-WRITE-CHECK technique*. Students must *look* carefully at a word, attempting to remember what they have seen; *cover* the word from view; *write* the word from memory (this may involve saying the word); and lastly, *check* the spelling attempt with the original. If the attempt is incorrect, the entire process is repeated.

SOCOWOC
will help you spell
Knock Knock Socowoc
This is how to spell
Look and cover
and write the word
Then check it really well
Write the word and say it
Softly, do not yell
Look and cover
and write and check
And you'll know how to spell

(Clarke 1980)

If this were the only spelling strategy children had, they would be limited to the spelling of words they could recall by using visual memory. Spelling involves using more knowledge about the structure of language than just visual association. For example, not knowing that 'cobol' means Common Business Oriented Language, or having never seen the word before, a student with phoneme-grapheme (sound-symbol) knowledge could still make the following spelling attempts: cobol, kobol or ckobol — attempts which could easily be checked in a dictionary for accuracy.

*A technique originally written about in 1919 by E. Horn.

A direct instruction morphographic method

Direct instruction programs are based on the behaviourist model of learning where Stimulus→Response→Repetition equals Learning. In the SRA published program *Morphographic Spelling*, Robert Dixon (1976) combines direct instruction principles of learning and morphographic analysis of words — morphographs being defined as the smallest units of meaning in written English (e.g. prefixes, suffixes and base words). Dixon (p.1) claims that after '. . . completing the 140 daily twenty-minute lessons, the student will be able to spell over 12 000 words . . .'

However (p.5):

> Although morphographic analysis is based on the idea that each morphograph has meaning, the meanings of many morphographs are not taught in the program. The reason is that the morphographic program is a *spelling* program, not a program in usage, philology, or grammar. (Spelling words correctly does not imply precise understanding of the word meaning.)

During the course of this program, '. . . all students must learn to give the exact, word-for-word response . . . exact responses given precisely on signal are necessary if the teacher is to get accurate feedback on student performance' (p.21).

However, it is expected that some students will '. . . require ten or more trials before they can produce the response, but do not proceed with the format until all students are firm on the response' (p.21).

Word Rule

Note. (Repeat until firm) means to repeat the indicated task until all students are responding correctly and on signal. When in doubt about any single student's response, give an individual turn.

a. LISTEN. ALL WORDS ARE MADE UP OF MORPHOGRAPHS.
SOME WORDS ARE MADE UP OF ONE MORPHOGRAPH.
SOME WORDS ARE MADE UP OF MORE THAN ONE MORPHOGRAPH.

REMEMBER. ALL WORDS ARE MADE UP OF MORPHOGRAPHS.

b. IF IT IS A WORD, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT? (Signal.)
"It is made up of morphographs."

To correct:
1. IT IS MADE UP OF MORPHOGRAPHS.
2. (Repeat step b until firm.)

c. IF IT IS NOT A WORD, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?
(Signal.) "It is not made up of morphographs."
(Repeat until firm.)

Lesson 1 of 140 lessons (Dixon 1976)

A major disadvantage of this direct instruction program, *Morphographic Spelling*, is that a class of children is expected to parrot off answers to questions on a given signal. What is the justification for treating children like trained seals, to respond on cue without knowing the meaning, purpose or function of the information they are being presented with?

Another disadvantage of this program is the teaching of words that are not correct English. This aspect presents a confusing model for learners of English as a second language.

Word Building

FIND PART **D** ON YOUR WORKSHEET.

GET READY TO WRITE SOME WORDS THAT HAVE MORE THAN ONE MORPHOGRAPH.

a. FIRST WORD: **UNHUMANNESS**.
WHAT IS THE FIRST MORPHOGRAPH IN **UNHUMANNESS**?
(S) "un."

b. WHAT IS THE NEXT MORPHOGRAPH IN **UNHUMANNESS**?
(S) "human."

c. WHAT IS THE NEXT MORPHOGRAPH IN **UNHUMANNESS**?
(S) "ness."

d. WRITE **UNHUMANNESS**.

Lesson 10 (Dixon 1976, p.75)

The issue in question with this approach is the basic beliefs and assumptions underlying the concept of how children learn. Encouraging students to understand the structure of the English language is an important part of learning to spell. Students need to develop the ability to use a meaning strategy in the spelling process. However, it is how we, as teachers, go about structuring learning environments which is also a key element in children's language learning.

Words which are related by meaning will frequently be related in their spelling patterns.

two	medicine	sign
twin	medic	signal
twenty	medication	signature
twilight	medical	signatory
twice		signify
between		
twain		
betwixt		
twofold		

The rule-based method

This approach relies on the principle that students can be taught the general 'rule', and can then apply that rule to the spelling of a particular word. Programs of this kind can be as simple as *The Old Fashioned Rules of Spelling Book* (Jamieson 1980, p.7), where one can find the following example:

> Words ending in silent 'e':
> *Rule 1*
> When a word ends in a silent 'e', you drop the 'e' before adding an ending which begins with a vowel.

Alternatively, programs of this nature can be as sophisticated as Elsie Smelt's *Complete Guide to English Spelling: A New Approach* (1983, p.10).

> Three basic spelling laws, principles, or rules must be understood: the whole study is based on them. They are:
>
> 1. Spelling is writing letters for sounds to form words.
> 2. One letter is written for each sound, unless it is known (from the study) that an extra letter has to be added.
> 3. Longer words are spelt by joining syllables to small words that have the same main meaning as the longer words.

According to Elsie Smelt, 'about 90 to 95 per cent of words are spelt regularly — that is, they can be written correctly by putting letters for sounds according to a few simple patterns' (Smelt 1983, p.2). However, in order to learn how to spell using this approach, the reader must work through eighty-six pages of rules and illustrations such as the following two (pp.18, 50):

> - A consonant is doubled after a short vowel sound when there is only one consonant sound before an English ending beginning with a vowel, as in hopping, hotter, funny, allotted, compelling.
> - Write 'ce' or 'se' for 's' sound after the LVS*, and after a consonant at the end of a word, as in ice, fence, use, case, dense, else.

Unfortunately, 'a few simple patterns' do not seem to be enough (p.30).

> When 'er' sound is heard in a word, check with the dictionary for the correct spelling, as no simple guide to the way of writing it can be given.

*LVS: Long vowel sound

Elsie Smelt (1983, p.87) goes on to include thirty-three pages of 'Words containing unusual or irregular ways of writing vowel and consonant sounds...'.

Teaching spelling generalisations in this abstract, isolated fashion is fraught with difficulties. Understanding such complicated rules is a problem; applying the correct rule in the appropriate place becomes a major obstacle to writing. Most importantly, when spelling is taken out of the context of meaningful writing, the purpose of correct spelling may well be lost.

The sound-symbol method

A variety of programs can be included in this broad classification. The traditional phonics approach usually begins by teaching children that letters of the alphabet 'make' specific sounds. For example, children are instructed that:

- *a* makes the sound in apple (*always* would not be used);
- *e* makes the sound of egg (*even* would not be used);
- *i* makes the sound in ink (*night* would not be used).

The five vowels are quite often taught first, then the consonants, then two-letter blends, three-letter blends, etc., etc. The teacher using this method continually impresses upon the student to 'sound out' the word, using sound-symbol knowledge (MacDonald 1984).

> Present the vowels first, only 'a' and 'e' on the first day, and then 'i', 'o' and 'u' on the next day. Make sure that the child can give the short sound for each, in random order and immediately, before going further. You might spend a few days on this. Teach the sound value with the picture — not the name of the letter. I do not *name* the vowels until *after* the child can correctly give the short sound for each one (p.27).
>
> . . . . .
>
> The consonants can now be presented. . .
>
> Teach the consonants in the following way. Introduce b, c, and d by *name* and *sound*. Now show the child how to *blend* the sound of the consonants learned with *each* of the vowel sounds (p.29).
>
> . . . . .
>
> On the next day, introduce three more consonants: f, g and h — again by *name* and *sound* (p.30).

Macdonald (1984, p.261) would have us believe that *a* should represent the sound in apple. However, in the following example there are eight different sounds involving the letter *a*.

It was a dark day as the
hare raced all around the
village after an apple**

A traditional phonics program also teaches children to blend stems. For example, the stems *ba*, *ca* and *fa* are often taught in isolation. The letters *ba* do not really represent any sounds until they are in the context of a word. The sound represented by *ba* in 'bat' is quite different from the sound *ba* represents in 'bathers' and the sound *ba* represents in 'bath'.

ca:	cat	fa:	fat
	came		father
	call		fate

**Transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the pronunciations of the parts of the words which contain the letter *a* are as follows:

IPA	*Word*	*Other examples of sound and spelling*
	w*a*s	(what, wash, want)
	a round	(alone, nation)
	d*ar*k *a*fter	(father, alms, clerk, sergeant, heart)
	d*a*y r*a*ced	(play, way, cake, game)
	*a*s *a*n *a*pple	(began, dance, glad)
	h*ar*e	(dare, bear, hair)
	*a*ll	(water, caught, small)
	vill*a*ge	(pretty, pocket, women)

Reference for transcription is *Collins English Dictionary* (Australian edition, edited by G. A. Wilkes, 1981)

Preparatory year

Level 1: Recognition of single sounds

	s m t l n r v
	a e i o u
	b c d g h j k p l
	w x y z qu
Writing single sounds	o a c d g q e l s
	h r p m n
	j l t k i b
	y u v w x z

Initial sounds

ant	bat	cake	duck	egg	lish
game	house	Indian	jelly	kite	lolly
mouse	nest	orange	pot	queen	rabbit
sun	toy	under	van	window	yellow
zebra					

Final sounds

grub	neck	sad	puff	rug	pal	pram
rain	soup	grass	spot	box	buzz	mat

Medial sounds

a	bag	cat	man	has	lab	van	ham
e	yes	wet	bed	hen	get	pen	peg
i	fin	jig	lit	six	lip	him	fix
o	hop	box	lock	moss	rod	hot	dog
u	pup	cup	buzz	cut	mud	duck	sun

Stems

(ā)	*(ē)*	*(ī)*	*(ō)*	*(ū)*
ba	be	bi	bo	bu
ca			co	cu
da		di	do	du
fa	le	fi	fo	fu
ga	ge		go	gu
ha	he	hi	ho	hu
ja	je	ji	jo	ju
la	le	li	lo	lu
ma	me	mi	mo	mu
na	ne		no	nu
pa	pe	pi	po	pu
ra	re	ri	ro	ru
sa	se	si		su
ta	te	ti	to	tu
va				
wa	we	wi		
ya	ye			

Source: Haynes & Meadows 1980

It is the *context* of a word in meaningful language that is important in teaching sound-symbol relationships, and this seems to have been neglected in this method. Children who are taught to rely on a limited one sound/one symbol interpretation of the sound-symbol strategy may just be the children who produce spellings such as the following.

These spellers may well be a product of our own teaching.	
becos	wot (what)
stopt	wuns (once)
noc	arst (asked)
ne	sed (said)

All of this is not to say that students do not need to know about sound-symbol relationships in English. However, they need to discover these relationships in written, purposeful language. The overemphasis of the isolated one sound/one symbol method is the problem — not the fact that the sound-symbol correspondence is not one hundred per cent accurate. To teach children this is to teach them an oversimplification about the English language that can only lead to frustration and failure. Our English writing system carries far more than simple sound information. It would be a very limited speller indeed who only had this sound-symbol strategy to rely upon.

Same pronunciation /sh/ but different graphemic representations	shoe	ocean
	sugar	pshaw
	mansion	conscious
	issue	fuchsia
	nation	schist
	suspicion	chaperone

dough	thorough	*Same graphemic letter pattern, ough, but different pronunciations*
bough	through	
rough	hiccough	
bought		

Dealing with spelling in an integrated language classroom

This approach takes the view that language encompasses talking, listening, reading, writing and spelling, and that these must be seen as an integrated whole rather than as isolated subskills. Of course children need to learn about the language strategies of sound-symbol association, visual relationships between words and how to use meaning to help in the spelling process (Fehring & Thomas 1984). However, they need more than just knowledge about the structure of English. Children need to:

- develop an interest in words by utilising their natural inquiry-and-discovery learning abilities;
- develop learning strategies like the have-a-go and look-say-cover-write-check routines, mnemonic strategies and proofreading techniques;
- practise spelling in purposeful writing activities — not by repetitious, isolated spelling tasks;
- develop a sense of responsibility and independence;
- learn how to use resources like dictionaries and thesauruses not only to check spelling attempts, but to help find a particular spelling.

> The more children use words — write them, read them, play with them, talk about them (enjoy them) — the more likely they are to develop into good spellers (p.15).

Most importantly, teachers need to be aware that spelling development occurs simultaneously with writing development. Spelling cannot be treated as an isolated subskill or just a tool for writing. In attempting to communicate clearly and precisely through writing, writers draw on strategies they have gained as readers, as listeners and as talkers, and on previous individual and shared writing experiences.

Teachers need to create learning environments which encourage all facets of language development. Children who when working with words integrate meaning, pronunciation, usage and the orthography of words, will build up cognitive networks that will enhance their ability to utilise information from all these language strategies when it comes to the spelling process.

To deal with spelling in an integrated language classroom, good organisation is essential. Time and flexible grouping techniques are important if children are expected to draft and revise their writing, talk about their work with peers and the teacher, expand vocabulary, check spelling and proofread their own and classmates' work. Fortunately, there is some very good material available to assist with ideas in this respect (Butler & Turbill 1984, Turbill 1982, Turbill 1983, Hill 1984, Wilson 1979, Walshe 1981, Anderson 1985, *Reading On* 1985).

Table 3.1 is but one of many possible examples of an integrated unit approach to language development.

Table 3.1 Newspaper unit

Language strategies to highlight	*Writing for different purposes*	*Social participation*
• Compound words — news/paper • Plurals — newspapers • Meaning-related words — newsprint newsagent — edition editor editorial editing — photograph photographer photography • Have-a-go techniques • Uses of a thesaurus to find alternate descriptors • Etymology of words	• Feature articles • Letters • Short stories • Editorials • Sports news Team work based on interest groupings to try writing in a variety of styles Production of a class newsletter or school newspaper; such a task would involve planning, writing, editing and proofreading	An excursion to a local or metropolitan paper could be organised (The *Age* and the *Herald* in Victoria both have 'Newspaper in Education' personnel on staff) • The children can take the responsibility for planning the excursion, which would involve lots of talking and listening activities • This activity could branch into social education by investigating all the careers involved in the paper industry

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39

Teaching Children Spelling Through Their Writing

Judy Turner

Teachers now view spelling as a developmental process. Just as in the right conditions children learn to talk, so in similar conditions do most children learn to spell effectively. Children assume responsibility for their own learning, while the teacher closely observes each child's progress and assists when the need arises.

In effect, the teacher hands the challenge to the child: 'What can you find out about spelling?' Through daily, meaningful encounters with language — talking, listening, reading, and particularly writing — the child grows in his or her understanding of words and develops an increasing ability to spell with accuracy.

'What can you find out about spelling?' This is an open-ended question. Children can answer it at their own pace, at their own level of ability and through their own explorations. It is a positive question. It expects that children will find out something — all will succeed.

The teacher who asks 'What can you find out about spelling?' is adopting an inquiry approach. Children will be observing, comparing, inferring, predicting, generalising, talking, listening, reading, writing . . . (all skills that are found in the NSW Department of Education's Investigating Science K-6 Policy). In fact, the definition for science education (Investigating Science K-6) can become the definition for spelling, with only minor changes:

> Spelling for children is a way of learning about themselves and their writing which will involve first-hand experiences, inquiry and problem solving.

Here is the difficulty. Although an inquiry, teaching/learning approach is advocated, how many teachers are implementing it in its true spirit? For some teachers, inquiry teaching is part of their repertoire of teaching methods. It would be true to say, however, that many teachers never use the inquiry mode — though they may indicate that they do, in documenting their classroom planning. The fact is that many teachers are most comfortable with a directive style of teaching — one which emphasises teaching children rather than helping children to learn.

What implications does this have for spelling? Based on what has been stated so far, we could predict that many teachers may choose not to teach spelling as a process of development, or else (because it will be mandatory to do so) they may try, but because it is so different from their natural teaching style and/or because it is so different from the way they believe spelling is learnt, they may return to the traditional approach, which they believe has worked so well for them in the past.

Fortunately, another factor may prevent this forecast from becoming a reality. This factor is writing. Already, writing has caused many teachers to change their attitudes about children learning. In many classrooms, as a result of writing, there is more talking and interaction between children, more control by children over what they are writing, more enjoyment and a greater quantity of writing and a higher-quality end product. And this happens at the same time as children move around the classroom, make mistakes, ask questions and try to solve problems they encounter. Children are finding out about writing *by* writing. Many aspects of inquiry learning are at work in writing classrooms.

The teacher has a more open classroom, where learning is taking place on an individual basis and where the teacher's role is one of conferencing, guiding, learning and helping children to work independently.

In the writing classroom, the teacher has much more opportunity to become an observer. It is this *observation of children learning* that is crucial to changing teachers' attitudes. Few teachers remain unaffected by exciting developments in writing that happen so spontaneously. Having tried a process approach to writing and *observed* how much children learn when given responsibility to make their own decisions at all stages of the process, few — if any — teachers would ever return to the 'old' composition.

Partly as a result of seeing children learning writing so successfully, teachers are looking at reading as a process — they are questioning total reliance on reading schemes, placing much greater emphasis on literature, and giving children much wider choice in what they read. The integrated nature of reading and writing is no longer being given lip service — it is happening naturally in many classrooms.

In such a climate, there can be real hope that spelling can be learnt where it belongs, as an integral part of writing. Hope that by observing children writing, teachers will begin to recognise that spelling is a developmental process. With awareness raised, changes can begin. For some the changes necessary in teaching style may be hard to achieve, but the experience so far of the exciting developments in writing in the eighties must lead educators to be very optimistic.

It's great that you have a go at words that SAY SOMETHING!! ... maybe we need to think of ways to nail down these ones that seem to catch you out!
W-A-G COLLEGE

SPELLING AND TEACHING STYLE

'What can you find out about spelling?'

TRADITIONAL SPELLING — Set lists	Teachers may be anywhere along this continuum.	SPELLING THROUGH WRITING

The teacher

- Teaches spelling separately from writing
- Knows exactly what words are to be treated
- Dictates what is to be learnt
- Has few management problems in the classroom
- Regards spelling as a memorisation task
- Feels secure — few changes occur from week to week
- Uses weekly dictation for children to apply their spelling knowledge
- Uses one format for meeting children's needs, e.g. three groups or quotas
- Has a short-term view of spelling — achievable in weekly segments

The teacher

- Understands language learning
- Recognises that spelling is part of the writing process
- May predict some of the words (from themes, class experiences) but cannot anticipate many of the words arising from children's writing
- Allows children to learn through their own efforts
- Observes, listens, discusses, intervenes when appropriate
- Helps the child choose what needs to be learnt
- Copes with individuals learning different words at different rates
- Regards spelling as a problem-solving process
- Encourages the child to use a wide range of strategies
- Encourages the child to become an independent speller
- Responds to new challenges
- Uses writing daily, for children to apply their spelling knowledge
- Changes approach according to needs, e.g. individual, flexible groups, whole class
- Views spelling as a long-term, developmental process

• Knows what outcome to expect • Tests — gives children a score, based on their apparent knowledge, to compare progress across the grade	• Cannot predict all the outcomes • Uses children's writing for diagnosis and further planning to meet children's spelling needs • Evaluates a child's knowledge, skills and attitudes
The child	**The child**
• Is told: what to learn	• Participates in choosing what to learn
• Is told how to learn	• Learns through a variety of strategies • Learns as own needs arise in meaningful situations and accepts responsibility for own learning (engages in natural learning) • Thinks, experiments, makes mistakes, tries to solve problems
• Is told when to learn (only in a spelling lesson)	• Learns in any lesson where writing occurs
• Knows that his/her spelling is compared with the progress made by other children	• Engages in social interaction, where spelling is discussed constructively with other children but comparisons of ability are not made
• Receives an extrinsic award	• Experiences an intrinsic reward • Remains confident, knows that teacher appreciates what he/she *can* do
(Spelling in this way is like asking a closed question — with one response.)	(Spelling in this way is asking an open question — 'What can you find out about spelling?' — encouraging thinking, exploring, making use of past experiences, etc. to come up with increasingly accurate responses.) Knowledge, skills and attitudes are developed as the child works towards becoming an independent, resourceful speller who is *willing* to write.

Take Parents With You

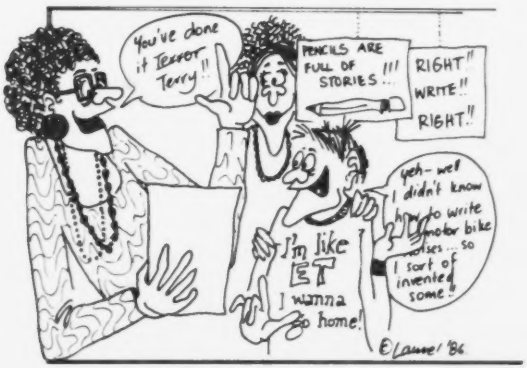
Glyn Turner

Parents know a lot about learning. Maybe they aren't able to articulate it as well as we can but they are, after all, the first teachers of their children. We often forget that. We also forget to take them with us when we journey into change.

Spelling is one of the most obvious and visible aspects of schooling. It is the area where many parents make instant judgments about what is happening at their child's school. Quite often those judgments are negative, and we are seen not to be doing our job properly. So we must talk to them about spelling and its links with writing, about how we will be teaching in the area of spelling, and about how children learn to spell.

One of the most powerful ways I've found to talk to parents about how children learn to spell is to draw parallels with learning to speak. I ask parents to remember that first euphoric moment when their child uttered his or her first word. Remember the pleasure, the excitement — and above all, remember that the word was probably not pronounced correctly! Remember the way they modelled the word, repeating it over and over again, and remember that they never doubted that their child would learn to speak properly.

And so it is with spelling and writing. If we can provide the same conditions for children to learn how to spell as those they have when they are learning how to speak, children will become proficient spellers. The positive atmosphere, the modelling, the allowance for attempts and the belief in their ability to become proficient spellers are all vital in the process. I've never yet had a parent who couldn't identify the similarities and who didn't then understand what we're trying to do.


You've done it Terror Terry!!
PENCILS ARE FULL OF STORIES...!!!
RIGHT!! WRITE!! RIGHT!!
yeh- well I didn't know how to write motor bike noises... so I sort of invented some!!
I'm like ET I wanna go home!
E Laune '86

'Knowledge is power' has been said many times before. We must give parents knowledge about our school program, so that they feel as if they are part of the very powerful partnership that we can forge with them.

Changes to spelling programs have developed extensively over the last few years. We know that children learn what is relevant to them and that therefore the links with writing must be made. We know that children learn visual patterns, and that phonics is not always reliable. We know that only three or four words can be learnt effectively at any one time.

For parents, their last contact with education was probably with their own — things have changed since then. When we don't slash a red pen through every spelling error in a piece of writing, we are not neglecting our duty. We are attending to other issues in that piece of writing, or we are only concentrating on three of the most frequently used words, or we have identified a couple of miscues which need working on with that child. We need to tell parents what we *are* doing so that they aren't concerned about what we're *not* doing! They understand that those other issues will receive attention from us in other pieces of writing or in other activities.

The rough draft of a piece of writing is often put under the microscope by parents. Some think that as *they* were never allowed to draft anything first, to do so is an unnecessary process. It is usually easy to talk to them about what they do if they've got an important letter to write — perhaps to the Taxation Office, or to the local council. They usually think about it first — talk about it to someone else. Quite often they'll write it out, check certain words and then write it again, neatly. Children should be allowed to follow the same process — to draft, to check spelling and then to rewrite if it's necessary. Some children can be reluctant to rough-draft a piece of writing, because of parent pressure. Many teachers get over that hurdle by having a notice:

> THIS IS A FIRST-DRAFT BOOK.
> IN IT YOU WILL SEE SOME MISTAKES.
> BECAUSE I'M PRACTISING TO BE A
> GOOD WRITER.
> YOU SHOULD SEE THE FINAL
> PUBLISHED WRITING!
> IT'S GREAT!

which is typed, photocopied and stuck on the front of a rough-draft book. It seems to give some children the licence to have a go!

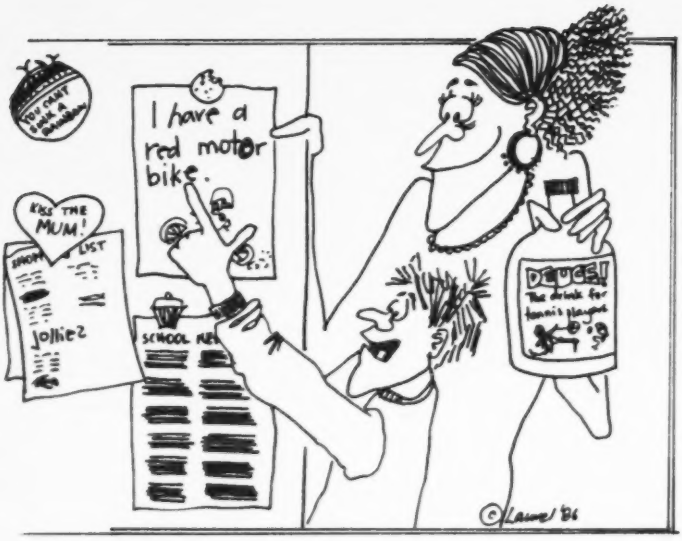
In taking a wry look at ourselves, I often talk to parents about what happens when a notice which has a spelling error in it goes home from school. More attention is usually paid to the mistake than to the message! (I've had a notice returned, marked out of ten by a parent — hopefully in a sense of fun!) Children need to recognise that this happens, and that published writing needs to have correct spelling so that the story or message is not lost. Advertisers, of course, use misspellings to great advantage. Think of the impact of LUV, KOOL, SNO and NU BRITE because of their different spelling! An activity I suggest parents do with their children is to spot the misspellings as they tour the supermarket. It gives both parties an insight into words and into how to get your spelling noticed when you don't want that kind of attention!

Another activity with which parents can support classroom programs is to allow children to have a go at spelling a word when they want to know a correct spelling. Asking children to first write down their attempts is vital — it gives information about what a child *does* know. We can praise children for what they do know, and then work on the small section that they don't know. Many times the word is correct and children are reinforced about their own abilities.

It worries me that sometimes adults make the spelling of a word a great mystery. It is important for children to have a go but it is equally important for us to give them the information they need on the spot, rather than to make them hunt around for a correct spelling. What normally happens then is that the child just uses simpler words and writes less in future! A result that none of us wants.

Playing word games — especially Hangman (or should that be Hangperson?) — is another useful activity that parents can become involved in with their children. This game teaches about probable letter combinations and gives us knowledge about how letters work together in words. There are lots of word games we can tell parents about — perhaps you could have a special day at your school, to show various word-based activities to parents. Use your newsletter or class publication to give your point of view about spelling.

Above all, let parents journey with you — and the journey into language-arts-based spelling programs will be less bumpy and less fraught with potholes!



'I don't like spelling and reading, because it's boring and you have to learn it lots of times. You have to read the page over and over and I get sick of it.' *(Grade 2 comment)*

'Written expression. That's hard. Because you can't think of anything to write. I can't think of words and all that and where you put full stops and commas and that.' *(Grade 5 comment)*

Matching Spelling Instruction to Individual Writers

Rhonda Jenkins

This article will describe an investigation into children's use of spelling strategies within writing. As a classroom teacher, I needed to justify to myself and to others that the change from using graded lists to using individual programs that could not be developed seven weeks in advance was educationally sound. An awareness of the increasing conflict between the use of a process approach to writing and the use of set lists for teaching spelling became more and more obvious as I encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Researchers De Ford and Harste (1982) point out some misconceptions about learning language:

1. The conventions of language can be learned and practised outside the process and then integrated, at a later date, into the process.
2. Growth is measured through control of convention.
3. The learner enters into proficiency through progressive stages of perfection.

I would like to use these misconceptions to point out some of the problems of traditional teaching of spelling, through the use of graded lists. Firstly, words isolated in such lists — without any obvious connection to other learning such as current reading and writing experiences and, often, to each other — are meaningless to many children. They cannot be integrated into the individual's present language experiences, because the list is often aimed at meeting a grade expectation and not at taking into consideration the range of individual abilities that are present in any one class.

Secondly, spelling growth measured by the number of correct spellings in a set dictation passage, or by the weekly testing of 'the list', is only measuring memory within a short space of time. Many teachers comment on children who are consistently achieving good marks in spelling tests but who, when they write, do not transfer the knowledge of particular words into the process. These children often become hung up on only writing correct or standard spellings; this usually results in less writing and more stilted writing.

Thirdly, with all learning there is a period of approximating the real event. For example, learning to ride a sailboard involves a period of mishaps, close calls and moments of confidence. As more sophisticated manoeuvres are tried, so the trial-and-error learning continues. Learning to spell occurs in the same way, with periods of experimentation, approximation, confident use of standard spelling, and a growing repertoire of standard use interspersed with forays into new subjects and forms of writing that begin the learning cycle all over again.

The traditional teaching of spelling did not build on the strengths of reading and writing to consolidate students' use of a variety of strategies that could be applied to the writing of all words. Lessons tended to be for the whole class, with emphasis on teacher selection of words to be learned in isolated lessons, characterised by drill and practice.

I felt that the teaching of reading and writing that operated in my classroom was at odds with this approach. There were some school constraints: a disbelief that any other method would harm children's spelling development, and the across-grade use of standardised tests in spelling. This piece of research evolved out of the need to ensure that I was meeting the needs of each of the children in the class and at the same time to be open to scrutinisation by doubting supervisors.

In support of my beliefs, I searched the research evidence for specific strengths of teaching spelling within the context of the children's writing.

Teale (1982) explains that when teachers break writing and spelling down to their parts, and then teach these parts with the belief that they will be reconstituted to produce writing and spelling, 'the teacher ignores how literacy is practised (and therefore learned) and thereby creates a situation in which the teaching is an inappropriate model for the learning.'

S. P. Corder (1967) discusses the significance of writers' errors. He states:

> . . . that learner errors are significant in three ways:
>
> 1. They tell the teacher if a writer undertakes a systematic approach to spelling particular words.
> 2. They provide the researcher with evidence of how writing is learned and what strategies the learner is employing.
> 3. They become a device that helps the learner to test hypotheses about the nature of spelling.

Margaret Peters (1975) has designed a diagnostic instrument that analyses misspellings in set dictation passages. This instrument is complex and time-consuming to use in a class situation. Though it will give a detailed picture of the types of spelling strategies students are using, the set passages given may not suit the individual student — especially those from non-English-speaking and Aboriginal backgrounds.

The emphasis of my research was to design an instrument that would enable teachers to match the teaching of spelling to the needs of individual students, demonstrated within their writing.

In the Reading Miscue Analysis presented by Goodman (1969), miscues are analysed as 'the windows in the mind' that allow the observer to determine the learner's use of reading strategies. This idea was used to develop a Spelling Miscue Analysis, so that both monitoring and analysing could be undertaken for individuals from real pieces of writing.

The other notion I wanted to investigate was the amount of spelling revision that students undertook between draft writing and final, polished writing that was ready for an audience. This I believed would indicate whether the student was attending to proofreading or whether visual memory failed to isolate misspellings. I believed that students who self-corrected a large percentage of their own misspellings needed little formal spelling instruction and would benefit from using their time in being involved in further writing experiences.

Title of writing

Word	*Misspelling*	*Type of error*						
		Abbrev.	*Prefix/ Suffix*	*Digraph*	*Vowel grouping*	*Omission*	*Corrected*
Total words written	**Total misspellings**						**Total self-corrected**

The Spelling Miscue Analysis (SMA)

This form of the analysis was used with children from a parallel Year 3 class. The analysis was matched to the kind of errors that seemed to arise consistently in this group's writing.

The analysis listed misspellings that occurred in draft writing, and noted these in the final polished piece of writing. The columns titled *Type of error* were:

Abbreviations:	misspellings of contractions and/or abbreviations;
Prefix/Suffix:	incorrect adding of prefixes or suffixes;
Digraphs:	misspelling of clusters — could be incorrect pronunciation or overgeneralised;
Vowel grouping:	alternative use of vowels to represent sounds in words;
Omission:	letters left out, accidentally or due to mispronunciation.

The column labelled as *corrected* was used to assess whether the child:

(a) had recognised the misspelling;
(b) had corrected misspellings through own initiative.

A percentage of misspellings as part of the total words written was used to indicate the general stage of spelling development. A percentage of corrected misspellings as part of total misspellings was used as an indicator of individual efforts in spelling correction between draft and published writing.

This form was kept simple, so that it could be used during a writing conference with the student. By dealing only with a few categories, the teacher could use this in the short period of 2 to 5 minutes that many such conferences take. I believed that the teacher needed to gain as much information in an efficient and effective way as was possible.

The miscue sheet was kept in the student's writing folder, and during conferences the teacher recorded the misspellings in draft writing. Published copies of writing were collected and the corrections recorded. This was repeated for each piece of writing undertaken by the student. Corrections were initiated by the student without direction from the teacher — they were not outlined by the teacher, but a reminder was given at the conclusion of the conference to check any spellings that the student was unsure of. This method altered during the data collecting period, because the completion of the analysis during the writing conference seemed to distract both the student and the teacher from the real purpose of the conference. The focus seemed to be on spelling — because of the recording of the misspellings — rather than on the meaning of the writing. The SMA was completed away from the student so that conference time could be devoted to revision of writing.

Response to data

The data collected had a twofold purpose:

1. As an indication of students' spelling development and individual use of strategies, the SMA would enable teachers to program and direct instruction for specific needs.
2. As a useful tool for classroom teachers, it could be used effectively and efficiently during a writing conference to provide the information needed for individualising instruction.

I believe that teachers need feedback and reassurance that students' spelling competence is progressing towards the standard model. The SMA should provide this through the comparison of correctly spelt words with misspellings and the degree to which students self-correct their misspellings.

Table 6.1 demonstrates the wide range of writing ability of the students in the study.

Table 6.1 Comparison of data for all subjects

Name	*No. of pieces*	*Total words*	*Total Mist/S*	*% Words*	*Total S/C*	*% S/C Mist/sp*
S.A.	8	635	52	8.2	26	50
H.B.	7	535	26	4.8	12	46
S.C.	6	413	22	5.3	7	31.8
M.D.	5	393	21	5.3	10	47.6
A.E.	3	327	34	10.4	5	14.7
R.F.	3	319	29	9.1	7	24.1
K.G.	4	312	11	3.5	5	45.4
M.H.	4	214	23	10.7	10	30.4
A.I.	3	129	20	15.5	15	70
B.J.	1	34	10	29.4	1	10

Not all writing reached a polished stage, even though students were involved in writing in a variety of activities. The percentage of misspellings as part of total words written shows the varying ability of the writers, as spellers. Several groups can be delineated for general discussion.

Group A – H.B., S.C., M.D., K.G.: misspelled less than 6 per cent
Group B – S.A., R.F., A.E., M.H.: misspelled between 8 and 11 per cent
Group C – A.I., B.J.: misspelled more than 15 per cent

Stages of spelling development suggest that Group A are proficient writers as well as proficient spellers. Three of these children were self-correcting more than 45 per cent of their misspellings at the final stage of writing. They are self-motivated learners, who can proofread their writing with an audience in mind and are able to use resources to confirm spellings.

Group B show errors in draft writing of between 8 and 11 per cent. These students tend to write shorter pieces and to take a longer period to complete the process of draft–publish. However, one student in this group was self-correcting 50 per cent of misspellings and showed some of the characteristics of Group A students. Concentrating on meaning during draft writing, and being in a rush to record the message, can mean that writers pay little attention to spelling. Other students in this group were self-correcting 25 per cent of their misspellings. These children need more experience in proofreading skills, to encourage them to look as a reader at their own and others' writing. An editor would need to pinpoint misspellings that have not been recognised after students have taken some responsibility for the proofreading.

Group C students are misspelling more than 15 per cent of the words they write. As writers they are less proficient, tending to write one-off pieces, and show reluctance to return to previous pieces of writing for revising and publishing. Encouragement in the use of the writing process seems to be needed in this group, rather than concentrated spelling instruction.

Analysis of the types of errors, as shown in Table 6.2, allows the teacher to highlight areas for whole-class, small-group and individual instruction.

Table 6.2 Types of errors

Name	*Abbreviations*	*Prefix/ Suffix*	*Digraph*	*Vowel groupings*	*Omission*
S.A.	1	3	8	30	10
H.B.	0	3	6	11	6
S.C.	1	2	1	13	6
M.D.	0	0	3	8	10
A.E.	0	3	10	19	2
R.F.	1	3	1	15	9
K.G.	0	0	4	3	3
M.H.	0	4	7	11	2
A.I.	0	6	3	12	1
B.J.	1	1	1	6	3
Total	**4**	**25**	**44**	**128**	**52**

The SMA allows the teacher to assess exactly what type of instruction is needed and to whom it needs to be directed. Profiles of individual writers/spellers can be developed by the use of SMA continually over a period of time or at intervals during the year, to provide very specific information for assessing development.

An example of one child's analysis over the data collection period demonstrates the variety of information that can be recorded and used.

Robert

	Word	*Misspelling*	*Type of error*						
			Abbrev.	*Prefix/ Suffix*	*Digraph*	*Vowel grouping*	*Omission*	*Corrected*
Swimming carnival	loved	loveed		1				N
	cheered	chered				1		N
	watched	wached					1	N
	diving	diveing		1				N
	dollar	dolar					1	N
	sprinkler	springkerla				1		N
	water	wata				1		N
	speaker	specer				1		N
	except	exsept				1		N
	too	to					1	N
	teachers	teaches					1	Y
	Total words: 126			2		5	4	1
Joke book	need	nee					1	Y
	legged	leged					1	N
	monster	monsta				1		N
	serve	serv					1	N
	tennis	tenis					1	N
	Dinosaur	Dineosore				1		Y
	cross	cros					1	N
	chickens	chicens			1			Y
	weren't	wernt	1					N
	invented	in ventid		1				Y
	squash	swash			1			Y
	juice	juse				1		N
	copycats	copie cats				1		Y
	jokes	joaks				1		N
	Total words: 136		1	1	2	5	5	6
Porsch	too	to					1	N
	stares	stears				1		N
	bought	bough					1	N
	engine	engein				1		N
	Total words: 57					2	2	0

Robert F. is an average writer/speller in this group. He has published three pieces in the collection period; however, two of these pieces are over 120 words in length. Twenty-nine per cent of words in his draft writing are misspelled and a further 24 per cent of these were corrected at the publishing stage. He shows a willingness to invent words to fulfil needs during writing and is able to make reasonable approximations (e.g. copie cats, joaks, springkerla). Many of his misspellings appear to need a simple letter-change (e.g. loveed, exsept, serv), which shows that when rereading, he concentrates on the meaning of the writing and

misses the simple misspelling. Some instruction in proofreading skills could be of benefit. Other misspellings show a mispronunciation of the word (e.g. inventid, wata). Word awareness activities such as crosswords, rhyming games, and reader's theatre will help clarify the relationship between pronunciation and the visual image of words.

Conclusion

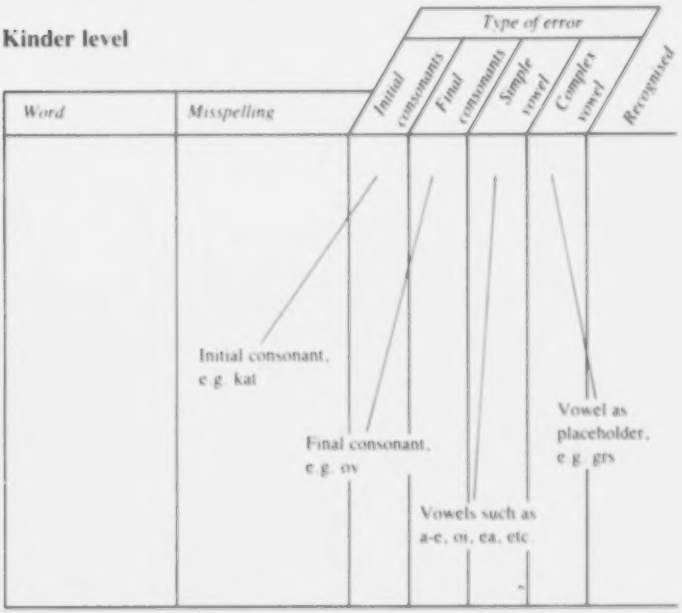
This analysis could be used in a variety of ways for diagnosis and evaluating learning:

- continuously over a short period (as in this study);
- twice a term for individual or whole group;
- twice a year, over several years, as part of school record keeping.

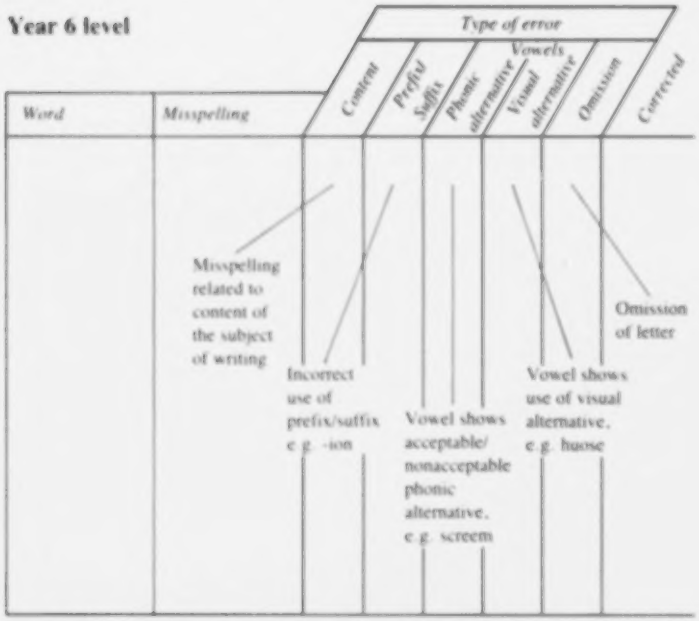
The SMA organises the information about the spelling processes that a writer uses, and those not fully learned. Teachers using a process approach to the teaching of writing will find that the SMA reassures them that children are learning to spell by writing, and by taking some responsibility for producing standard spellings in published writing.

The Spelling Miscue Analysis can be adapted to suit particular groups of children at any stage, K-6. Two examples below demonstrate how the analysis can be developed for use, in Kindergarten and in Year 6.

Kinder level



Year 6 level



The Spelling Miscue Analysis, used in the ways outlined in this project, will provide useful information about individual spelling abilities, which will allow teachers to maximise instruction and realistically assess progress.

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'We do something one day. Then we do the same thing the next day, and nerly all through the week sometimes.' *(Grade 5 comment)*

Spelling Is For Ever

Geoff Ward

Have you ever looked up a word in a dictionary and been aware that you have previously looked up its spelling — perhaps many times? That is an experience we have probably all had. Why do we never seem to learn a spelling once and for all? I think that there are several factors involved. I also think that an understanding of why this happens to us might alert us to some important understandings about what should happen when children learn to spell words.

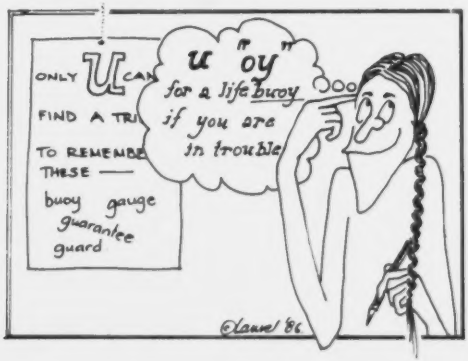
Other chapters in this book address many of the important issues involved in teaching, learning and studying spelling, so I will confine myself to putting forward a very simple — but I believe often overlooked — point of view. It is this: if you learn to spell a word you should never in your life spell it wrong again.

The corollary is obvious: if you get a word wrong, then you have not learnt to spell the word. I think that many of the spelling programs structured by teachers (or text books) do not really help children to master words permanently. In some cases, the ways in which spelling is 'taught' actually limits children's development of spelling competence, particularly by diverting them from an understanding of what learning to spell means, onto a detour, where the goals are seen as getting the words right in tests and finishing activities using the list words for the week, without a concern to be able to write effectively, choosing words with confidence in one's ability to spell them.

Whatever other problems may exist in spelling programs, it is certain that many children spend a great deal of time inadequately learning to spell words. They may 'learn' them sufficiently well to pass the test on Friday, but perhaps, the next time a problem word comes up in their writing, they may make the same errors that they made before the word appeared in the weekly spelling list — or they may produce another novel spelling. Alternatively, children may recognise that this word is a continuing problem, and look it up in a dictionary. In either case, they have failed to gain the level of knowledge which must be reached to justify the time spent in having a spelling program at all.

How does this relate to the shared dilemma of uncertain spellers described at the beginning of the chapter? Why do we look up the standard spelling of a word? Either we simply do not know how to spell the word, or we know more than one *potentially* correct spelling but can't tell which one is *in fact* correct. I think it is significant that the second possibility is more often true, especially for reasonably profi-

cient spellers. Even if we are not sure how a word is spelt, we are likely to have two or more alternatives, one of which we think is right. Generally, people do know a correct spelling for the words that they want to use. Their problem is that they also know other ways to spell the words without being certain which of them is correct. Is it 'relevance' or 'relevence', 'gauge' or 'guage'? Does 'embarrass' have two r's, or is



that 'harass'? For many of us, the spelling is easily resolved by writing down the alternatives. Given the visual display, we can unerringly make the choice for many of the words which cause us to have momentary doubts.

Unfortunately, that does not work for all spellers or for all spellings. Many teachers have had the unnerving experience of finding that exposure to incorrect spellings has sapped rather than strengthened their confidence in their own abilities to spell some problemmatic words. We may use a dictionary to resolve such problems as they occur.

Dictionary use serves a variety of purposes, but two are particularly relevant to writing. One is to check that a spelling is correct, or to find out how to spell a required word. Thus, if you are not certain that my spelling of 'problemmatic' is correct, you could ascertain that in fact it has only one 'm'. The other significant use of the dictionary in writing is to check on the appropriateness of a word choice. In my example, if you check the definitions given you might find that not only was the word incorrectly spelt, but its selection transcends being problematic and is simply wrong (notwithstanding the fact that it is commonly misused in this way).

The point to note in these two uses is that they satisfy short-term or immediate needs. While one can use the dictionary as an aid to permanent learning, it is more frequently used to resolve questions requiring an instant answer. Clearly, we have many occasions when consulting a dictionary — or another authority — serves only to remove a vague disquiet about a spelling, and attention at such a time to permanent learning of the word would be both inappropriate and inconvenient. As far as possible, writers try not to let their use of a dictionary interfere with the flow of their writing. Many authorities in the field recommend that issues such as spelling and punctuation be left to later drafts and that the first draft concentrate solely on getting the ideas down as fluently as they can be poured onto paper or screen. I, for one, don't work that way. My need for closure demands that I shall resolve questions of spelling as they arise. If others can handle this issue in a different manner, then they can do so with confidence that the practice has strong endorsements. However, I do not believe that one way is more desirable than the other, unless the writer is losing the thread of the piece of writing during a lengthy hiatus while spelling is checked. The composing process is varied — not just between writers, but also within the work of a single writer and even within a single piece of writing. Different modes of operation have different effects on writers. It is common to find young writers who will happily invent spelling when they are writing by hand, but who will not tolerate a nonstandard spelling on the screen when they are working with a word processor. No clear, non-contentious guidelines could be given as to how and when to use a dictionary within the writing process.

The short-term use of the dictionary, however, means that it provides an answer that is generally not processed to a level of long-term retention. We often obtain information that serves an immediate purpose but is not transferred to other uses. A common situation illustrates this. You may look at your watch and then someone, who notices that you have done so, asks you what the time is. Even though you have just looked at your watch, the odds are extremely high that you will look at it again in order to obtain an answer. The reason, in most cases, is that in looking

at your watch you were not seeking to 'register' the time, as much as to relate the indication of time to some question that you were asking: for example, how long you have to wait for a particular event, such as the lunch break. Your glance was enough to provide you with the answer you needed, but would not be likely to provide an answer to another question, or perhaps even to the same one asked again.

Although these examples may not seem to involve the same kinds of behaviour as the inadequate learning of spelling, I believe that they illustrate the problem of how and why students, who have ostensibly learnt the spellings of particular words, fail to remember them on every occasion that they need them.

I believe, then, that we should carefully distinguish the *learning* of spellings from the *obtaining* of spellings. I am not arguing about whether or not students should be learning words in spelling lists, or about the selection of words which students should learn. My argument is simply that if students are to learn the spelling of a word (on their own initiative or at the direction of the teacher), they should learn it in such a way that they will always remember it. They must be able to recognise when it is spelt correctly, distinguish it from incorrect spellings, and feel confident in using it in their writing.

When I have talked about this idea to students, teachers and other adults, I have found that they have almost invariably been surprised by it. Habitually, learners have not attacked the learning of a spelling with a determination to learn it 'for ever'

In this brief chapter, I am not tackling in detail the methodology of learning spelling. The most important difference, in the procedure for learning words, that I would want to instigate in classrooms — and the most significant advice I can offer for adults trying to improve their own spelling — is that learners should approach the task of learning to spell a word with a determination that they will never have to learn it or look it up again. It is also important to note that it is through using words in published form that students generate a need and desire to spell correctly.

In some cases, permanent learning of spellings may require use of mnemonics, or memory aids. When I first started using this idea with children, I told them that two of my own problem words were 'buoy' and 'gauge'. I explained that I didn't know why they should cause me trouble, but that though I could usually tell which spelling of a word was correct by looking at the possible alternatives, for some reason I could look at 'bouy' and 'buoy', or 'gauge' and 'guage', and not be able to tell which were correct. I knew that I had never set out to learn them so distinctly that I could never get them wrong again. I asked my class if they could give me any suggestions. One child said, 'Well, "buoy" is

"b" and then "you" spelt backwards.' I thanked him, and said that I was sure that I would never have trouble with the word again. In fact, while they were studying the words, I solved the problem of 'gauge'. As I pointed out to them, it parallels 'gouge', a word I would not get wrong. Of course, the confusion with 'gauge' had been that I had never dissociated its spelling from that of words like 'guard' and 'guarantee'.

Accurate and confident spelling cannot be based on an unwieldy collection of mnemonics. But what these experiences did for me was to establish a very clear knowledge of the words. I do not need the mnemonics now and probably didn't need them at all from the moment I really looked at the words with a desire to get them learnt once and for all. Once I had focused on how the words were spelt and how they were not spelt, I was able to master them. I could not possibly look at the incorrect spellings now and have doubts.

There is a difference, of course, between a competent, mature speller mastering a few words which have been problems, and a struggling child battling against seemingly insurmountable hordes of unknown words. Nevertheless, learning a corpus of words must start with confidence in some words. The more effective children can be in securely learning some words that they have identified as words they want to be able to spell, the more able they will be to progress to a wider vocabulary of known words. Surely, one feature of an effective spelling program must be that children are helped to identify words which they can and should learn to spell. Teacher assistance may help children select those words which will most usefully repay time spent learning them. Teachers and students together should investigate ways in which they can make that learning permanent. Just being aware that there is a difference between learning a word temporarily, for immediate purposes of writing or to pass a test, and learning in order to retain it for ever, is a good start.

There are many instructional and learning strategies for developing competence in spelling. I have focused on the learning of particular words, with scant reference to the important issue of where these words come from. I have not taken up the wider issue of how children learn the generalisable spelling skills of understanding and applying spelling patterns, or of how to develop both a spelling conscience and spelling consciousness in students. There is much that we have to learn about the most productive ways to facilitate children's growth in spelling confidence and competence. What we need to explore are approaches that do not intimidate learners, or make them feel badly about themselves as learners. Any procedure that meets this criterion will have at least some value. I suggest that the added dimension of setting out to make any learning that is done *permanently* successful will enhance whatever procedures you adopt. Good spelling is for ever!

'We don't get enough hard words. They should be harder.' *(Grade 5 comment)*

'You write and then you make a mistake and write it again and you keep on writing it until you get it right.' *(Grade 3 comment)*

'If we had more reading, then we'd be better at spelling and creative writing. We'd probably be perfect in everything.' *(Grade 6 comment)*

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